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THE

POET'S MANUAL.

A SATIRE.

[Price One Shilling.]

Robinson

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T H E

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A S A T I R E.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

[Price One Shilling]

T H E
P O E T ' S M A N U A L .
A S A T I R E .

By J O H N R O B I N S O N .



L O N D O N :

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ERRATA.

Page 5. Line 17. for *fore*, read *soar*.

THE
POET'S MANUAL.

SINCE first some heaven-taught bard, with tuneful tongue,
The praise of Gods, or deeds of heroes sung,
Critics in every age have grasp'd the quill,
Prais'd what was well, and censur'd what was ill ;
Some, with superior judgement, bards have taught
To form the plan, and strictly weigh the thought,
To bid the manners stand the nicest test,
And wake the passions in the feeling breast ;
For me, who little boast the Critic's art,
As little boast the pow'r to reach the heart,

Boast less than modern bards poetic fire,
 Nor aim to rival what I much admire ;
 Be mine to teach the doubting bard to chuse
 The safest subjects to indulge his muse,
 To guide his little bark from danger free,
 Tho' rocks and quicksands lurk amid the sea.

Hapless the wretch whom partial fates incline
 To deal in wit, and wanton with the Nine,
 Who never doffs his cap, and turns aside,
 To sooth with praise some pow'rful patron's pride ;
 But with fond rashness vent'ring at the crime
 To tell plain truth, and tell that truth in rhyme,
 In ev'ry rigid rule of virtue bred,
 And still by honour's empty sound misled,
 The simple freedom of his heart displays,
 And where he finds not merit, gives not praise.
 What boots the trifling boast of being wise ?
 Of Parian stone he bids no column rise,
 Nor gilds the roof superb, nor dines in state,
 Whilst art is rack'd to ornament the treat ;

What

What if his deeds have never known reproach?
 Has he six footmen lolling on his coach?
 Will thrifty knaves obsequious looks afford,
 And hail him, in obliging tone, *My Lord?*
 Wrapt in his boasted virtue tho' he sit,
 And scorn the happier man exempt from wit,
 Such, nurs'd in plenty's bosom shall return
 The harmless sneer, and scorn repay with scorn;
 The luckless wretch shall cold neglect oppress,
 And fortune shun averse, nor deign redress.

When genius then in early youth is shown,
 The prudent parent strives to keep it down,
 Anxious the threat'ning mischief to destroy,
 In his own steps he guides the fav'rite boy,
 Nor spares for precepts laudably design'd
 To cramp in narrow bounds the lib'ral mind;
 Blest should success with smile benign attend,
 And guide his labours to their destin'd end,
 Blest should his pupil (tho' with boundless pride,
 Av'rice, and saucy petulance beside,

Less honour and less honesty than heav'n
 To bribing statesmen and their tools has giv'n)
 Securely mock at poverty's alarms,
 Folding the blinded goddess in his arms.
 But should the fire these prudent cares disdain,
 Nor urge the rude restraint, but think it vain,
 Permit the youth, by genius led astray,
 With tuneful verse to trifle time away,
 Low, fordid maxims teach him to detest,
 And plant the seeds of honour in his breast,
 Finding the profit of his schemes at last,
 How shall he moan his erring conduct past,
 How break his peace with unavailing care,
 That power and wealth are luckier dullness' share!

And what resource?—Content, indeed, 'tis said,
 Looks not to wealth and affluence for aid,
 Firm in itself and past expression great,
 It lives unshaken 'midst the storms of fate,
 Knows toil and pain and anguish to beguile,
 And meets the heaviest evils with a smile,

Yet

Yet prudence thinks 'tis hardly to be found,
But with a thousand times a thousand pound.

Horace, 'tis urg'd, in many a jocund song,
Boasted content his Sabine fields among,
Welcom'd kind fortune, while she deign'd to stay,
Nor seem'd to dread her absence, if away;
Virtue his guide, no cause he knew for fear,
And look'd on verse an antidote to care.

But Fabius answers (and will he that's wise
Or Fabius' wealth or Fabius' words despise?)
" Spite of his boast, had fortune's favours fail'd,
" Nor tuneful verse, nor virtue had avail'd
" To save the needy poet's peace from harm;
" Virtue!---what's virtue to a *Sabine Farm*?

Then let no vot'ry at the muses shrine
The thoughts of ease and poverty combine,
Howe'er the mind with genius fraught may fore,
Charm'd with the beauties of poetic lore,
Howe'er soft pleasures steal upon the sense,
When verse employs, and cares are banish'd thence,

'Are Dress, Precedence, Luxury deny'd,
Prudence still combats on the adverse side.

But if a youth, seduc'd by love of fame,
Will barter wealthy views to gain *a Name*,
Thro' fairy scenes of verse howe'er he stray,
Oh, let him shun where satire leads the way,
And, if resolv'd his tender wings to try
In long excursions, choose a summer sky.

The man whose conscious bosom's charg'd with crimes,
Can find no wit in satire's galling rhimes,
But if a swain, beneath a hawthorn laid,
Drawls out a ditty to the *cooling shade*,
Tells how the waters *in meanders glide*,
Then sweetly bids the couplet close with *tide*,
And sings *the groves how brown, the fields how green*,
Unmov'd he reads by fits, and sleeps between.

When am'rous swains in am'rous couplets speak
The blushing roses on the fair-one's cheek,
Of hopes and fears which in their bosoms strove,
Of looks *all* languishing, and sighs and love,

When

When Pindar's sons, on daring pinions borne,
 Ascend the skies, and view us men with scorn,
 Converſe with Gods in ſtile unfit for earth,
 And flout at plain good ſenſe as little worth;
 Or when the laureat hymns the new-born year,
 In ſtrains moſt fitting for a lady's ear,
 With happieſt odes, which win the victor's prize,
 Tho' Strophe with Antiftrophe in dullneſs vies,
 No vengeful foes their harmleſs verſes bring,
 But modiſh ears are raviſh'd while they ſing.

Oft have I heard, when Chaucer, Spencer, came,
 To pay their tribute to Muſæus' fame,
 When Milton cring'd ſubmiſſive, and deny'd
 His pow'r in verſe, and ſooth'd Muſæus' pride,
 When quaintneſs reign'd, and wit was ſtill to ſeek,
 Oft heard the modiſh wits enraptur'd ſpeak,
 With art, they cry, with art this verſe is wrought,
 How charming this, how exquiſite that thought!
 With how much taſte, with how much judgment writ!
 How wondrous great the pow'r of human wit!

With

With profit how this bard delight combines !---
 Curse on that Churchill, with his rough-hewn lines.
 Such are the themes which safely may be try'd,
 And oh, let prudence still from danger guide.
 Prudence will teach a bard should ne'er set forth
 The courtier's honour, and the courtier's worth,
 Ne'er tell his arts, dependents to beguile,
 From downright promise to consenting smile,
 Nor name this maxim as his rule alone,
 To praise his country's welfare---seek his own.

Nor (would a bard politest readers chuse,
 Such as who doze o'er Whitehead's sober muse)
 Shall squeaking eunuchs grace his trivial lay,
 The fops that praise them, or the dames that pay,
 Fops who with loud Eulogiums still at hand,
 Seek to persuade how much they understand,
 On fav'rite musick random praise bestow,
 And sweet expression, which they nothing know,
 Sage, cautious dames, who *harmless things* admire,
 And think the lab'rer worthy of his hire.

These

These, if once nam'd, their utmost malice try,
 At tea-tables the culprit bard decry,
 From beau to belle the vengeful tale goes round,
 And shrill Italians echo back the sound.
 Haply in days of yore, when truth had place,
 Ere modern manners brought it in disgrace,
 The plain, rough Briton spoke but from his soul,
 And scorn'd the stile of freedom to controul,
 The fool he call'd so, nor had cause to fear,
 Tho' blunt his manners, and his heart sincere;
 But call the simple dotard from the tomb,
 His native bluntness bid him now assume,
 Let him now dare in honest sounds repeat,
 This man a villain is, and that a cheat,
 A traytor L--- and painted G--- a wh---,
 No patient audience listens as before;
 Soon as (tho' naming these) the fool should speak,
 The conscious blood would glow in ev'ry cheek,
 Thousands wou'd damn him, whosoe'er he blam'd,
 And justly think themselves by proxy nam'd.

Oh, for those happier times, so free from ill,
 That satire scarcely wish'd to draw her quill,
 Those happier times, when Britons bold and brave,
 Disdain'd with one consent the selfish knave,
 Love of their country then their minds inspir'd,
 And Heaven-born amity their bosoms fir'd;
 Then hospitality, with gen'rous smile,
 Taught the poor lab'rer to forget his toil,
 And to the needy stranger deign'd afford,
 A cordial welcome at the genial board;
 Then too the manly race robust and strong,
 In fighting fields, and horrid arms among,
 Fierce in the front of danger sought renown,
 And knew no valour equal to their own;
 Proud Gallia frequent felt the vig'rous stroke,
 And abject stoop'd beneath the galling yoke,
 And ev'ry people who their prowess heard,
 Sought them as friends, as foes with reason fear'd.

Such times are now no more; a puny race,
 Of those, their dreaded ancestors take place;

The

The plain, old-fashion'd virtues these deride,
 Their pleasure luxury, and dress their pride;
 Low cunning current goes with these for wit,
 And ev'ry art is just, that tends---to get:
 Self-int'rest is the rule that all commend,
 And he's a downright fool that serves his friend.

Where's the precedence virtue once obtain'd?
 And where that awful rev'rence once it gain'd?
 The worthiest wight our glorious days behold,
 Is he that boasts the hugest heaps of gold,
 Howe'er acquir'd, his merit's still the same,
 And cringing flatt'ry gives him up to fame.
 The next to him his fav'rite pimp is known,
 Who by his patron's pow'r extends his own;
 All besides these, the bad, the great, the good,
 Are but with trifling diff'rence understood,
 Each more belov'd as fortune gives him power,
 Virtue alone but sinks its votary lower.

In times like these, had prudence been my guide,
 My muse had never rank'd on satire's side,

How

How when at first I chose from thence a theme,
 How of my numbers then did malice deem?
 What rank ill-nature did it strive to find,
 Tho' undisguis'd my phrase, conceal'd behind?
 What worthless friends I lost, and oh, what foes,
 Ten times more worthless, then against me rose
 And when my satire lurk'd beneath a veil,
 Dress'd in the modish habit of a tale,
 E'en from the novel mischief was deriv'd,
 Again the slumb'ring enmity reviv'd,
 Not then their rankling spite could they restrain,
 But spent their little rage, yet spent in vain.

'Tis not the sat'rist that's condemn'd alone,
 But on his song is equal scandal thrown,
 No skill, 'tis held, is needful to compose
 Its strongest diction, and its verse is prose;
 No tropes, no figures grace the venom'd lays,
 Nor flow'ry sentiments to earn the bays :
 But dullness may o'er ev'ry line preside,
 If dullness has but pertness by her side :

And

And sense too may be wanting; put the case
 That hateful spite supplies the vacant place;
 And for it's power; there scarcely lives the fool,
 From the grey dotard to the boy at school,
 But hears it mention'd with contemptuous smile,
 Tho' vainly flouncing in its toils the while.

And let them feign---from surer rules be shown
 The pow'r of satire, and its worth made known.

Of fools or villains who from earliest times,
 Have glar'd conspicuous in a sat'rist's rhimes;
 Of great or small whom satire deign'd to wound,
 (And none too mighty for her lash are found)
 On which has satire try'd her pow'r in vain?
 Or which has found the means to break her chain?
 Statesmen whose wily arts have mischief plan'd,
 And drawn destruction on their native land;
 To fate whose pride have warlike legions bled,
 And loyal blood with infamy been shed,
 Who much their monarch's favour have abus'd,
 To vilest purposes their pow'r misus'd,

E

Sought

Sought ev'ry salutary scheme to foil,
 And cramm'd their purses with a nation's spoil;
 These can the fat'rist to succeeding times
 Transmit with all the burden of their crimes,
 Shew forth in ev'ry hateful point of view,
 Recite the crimes, and be th' avenger too,
 Long after history's tedious page shall fail,
 And mute oblivion seize her drowfy tale ;
 Nor shall the wretch his aged fire who gave
 The deadly draught which sent him to the grave ;
 Nor who his wife for favour or for gold,
 His wife and self to fell dishonour sold ;
 Nor shall the villain who with treach'rous art,
 From virtue's precepts sway'd the guileless heart ;
 Nor who unpitying felt not for his friend,
 Unpunish'd to the latest times descend.

To mend, indeed, the morals, ere too nice,
 Too proud the world was grown to take advice,
 Was ever, tho' conceal'd, the fat'rist's aim,
 And only next to this his hopes of fame :

But

But now who reads, but reads with spiteful thought,
 Perverting ev'ry beauty to a fault,
 E'en as when priests the laws of Heav'n explain,
 And teach the lawless passions to restrain,
 Ill-manner'd wits frequent the house of pray'r,
 Nor seek to learn, but go to cavil there.

These truths let ev'ry bard, who means to find,
 And hiss at folly, treasure in his mind.
 For him who meanly shakes at fortune's frown,
 And thinks her worth superior to his own,
 Some wealthy patron let the dastard chuse,
 And prostitute for hire his venal muse :
 His task be then with all his little art,
 To praise his patron, and his great desert ;
 Still as the year brings round th' auspicious morn,
 On which to happiest fates his Lord was born,
 In ode or sonnet swell'd with sounding rhyme,
 His fawning muse shall hail the joyful time ;
 Or Thyrsis meeting Daphnis shall rehearse,
 In rustic numbers and alternate verse,

The

The bliss, the pleasures of the neighb'ring swains,
 Long as their bounteous Lord shall glad the plains,
 And if kind Heav'n, to crown the patron's joy,
 Repays his careful labours with a boy,
 The bard with lullabies the babe shall greet,
 Which trip it quaintly on poetic feet,
 Shall surely sing how well the virtuous heir
 Will pay the knight's, and eke the lady's care,
 And teach his lord's dependents to admire
 The peerless graces of the new-born squire.

These with a thousand wholesome arts beside,
 Which bards will learn who fondly flatter pride,
 Bid fair to bring the poet in renown,
 Tho' dullness load his verse, to keep him down:
 Nor few the blessings known to bards like these,
 Who truly boast the wish'd for art to please;
 Oft as the patron, struck with moping spleen,
 Hides from the world, and hates the beauteous scene,
 The servile poet, Zany like, is fit
 To cheer his gloomy soul with quirks of wit;

Or

Or if with frolic mirth his hours are crown'd,
 And jocund song, and gen'rous wine go round,
 Then too the bard is deem'd a needful guest,
 With antick gestures to divert the rest,
 To frame the catch obscene, to drink, to join
 Their mad'ning revels---and to fill their wine.

Thus the domestic bard, with pliant will,
 Obeys the nod, nor stops at good or ill ;
 For this his happy lot allows to feel
 The mod'rate joys of many a sparing meal ;
 For this, to tune at ease his wretched note,
 And brave the winter in a thread-bare coat ;
 To tease the cook-maid with his am'rous flame,
 And in acrostics wanton with her name.
 Ah, what enchanting prospects thence arise !
 What views delightful to the muse's eyes !
 When in his eve of life the bard worn out,
 When now some threescore years have roll'd about,
 The greasy nymph resigns her loathsome charms,
 Her wrinkled beauties to his longing arms !

What blessed change shall in the bard be shown,
Who at some inn shall then the host be known!

Nor is it thus alone that fate repays
The prudent bards who largely deal in praise.

A youth I knew, a youth ally'd to fame,
Riches his idol, fordid gain his aim,
In easy cadence all his verses flow'd,
And partial Heav'n a little wit bestow'd;
From day to day 'twas Attalus he sung,
For all his hopes on Attalus were hung,
His fruitful panegyric, bold and strong,
Pour'd compliment on compliment along.
When Attalus receiv'd his blushing bride,
"The laughing Cupids frolick'd by her side;"
When brib'd constituents gave their venal voice,
"Mortals were glad, and Gods approv'd the choice;"
And if or gainful place or pension fell,
"Misjudging fortune once had acted well."
For this the youth had plenteous favour shown,
His hours roll'd easy, and his fame was known,

'Till

'Till once too sparing of his fulsome lay,
The boasted favour all was thrown away,
The patron's vengeance nothing could retard,
'Till pow'rful malice crush'd the hapless bard.

Will then the poet with disdain refuse
Obedience to the dictates of the muse?
Will he still dare with honour to be free,
Nor at the shrine of riches bend the knee?
Will ev'ry caution but excite his scorn,
Nor precepts teach him, nor example warn?
Let him with stubborn soul provoke his fate,
And know repentance when it comes too late;
Let him, a champion sworn in virtue's cause,
Deserve and hope, but vainly hope applause;
For not alone who feels or fears the dart
From satire's hand, which reaches to the heart,
But ev'ry son of folly shall conspire,
With unabating toil, and vengeful ire,
To keep his soul in everlasting dread,
And heap destruction on his guilty head.

F I N I S.

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